



Children and Family Services  
Training Center  
Department of Social Work  
University of North Dakota

# Fostering Communications



Fall 2008

*Building a Network of People in the Foster Care System*

Vol. XXIV No. 3

## PATH Family Support

*By Bill Grommesh*

**P**ATH Family Support provides service to families with children struggling with mental health issues and are at risk for out of home placement. This is a voluntary program that is offered to families. The focus of the program is to maintain these children in their homes with their families, avoiding the need for out of home placements. The program offers families a comprehensive treatment alternative in their own home and communities while maintaining and supporting their families' relationships, providing safety and adequate care to divert longer term and more costly out of home placements. The need and utilization of the PATH Family Support program has continued to grow throughout the years.

The Family Support Program has proven to be highly successful in maintaining children in their homes and avoiding out of home placements. Over the past three years, just under 80% of the children served within the program have been able to be maintained at home.

**How does a child qualify for PATH Family Support services?** Children ranging from age zero to 21 may qualify for the service. There must be a risk of out-of-home placement or prior placement in residential treatment, psychiatric hospitalization, or therapeutic foster care. They must have a DSM-4 psychiatric diagnosis; their Global Assessment of Functioning or GAF score, must be at 50 or below. A physician, psychologist or licensed independent clinical social worker must recommend PATH Family Support services, and the child must be North Dakota Medical Assistance or Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Dakota Insurance eligible.

**What does the Family Support program offer in order to help maintain children at home?**

1. *Relief Care:* A child and their family will be matched with a licensed support home. The child will attend the support home between four and six overnights per month. Additional overnights are available if necessary. This relief care gives the Child's parents and the child the ability to have a break and reenergize. While the child is at the support home it also gives the support parents the opportunity to help address the child's problematic issues. The support

parents are trained licensed foster care providers that serve as relief care providers and mentors, while supporting children and families.

*Parents receive three to four hours a week of mentoring support:* This is perhaps the most important component of the program. Often times in order to make long lasting changes for the child there also needs to be changes in the parenting they receive. Prior to coming into the program, parents often feel targeted, un-respected, unheard and generally beat up by the system. The focus of the program is to support these parents, build trust and communication, teach positive parenting, and give them the feedback they need in order to make the positive changes within their family. This can only be done once a very trusting relationship is established between them and support parents,

2. *Treatment planning* and case management. A PATH Family Support Worker case manages. This case manager is responsible for helping wrap services around the family, coordinating treatment plan meetings and facilitating these meetings, as well as giving ongoing support to the support home. The treatment plans focus on behavioral planning, crisis planning, and team coordination.
3. Other components offered by the program may include support and advocacy for the child and their families, ongoing educational opportunities, resource development, and support group meetings.

There have been many highly successful cases resulting from this voluntary program. The average length of stay in the program is approximately eleven months. Yet the length of stay in the program varies widely. Recently an 18 year old girl was discharged from the program. She had been in the program for over three years. She entered the Family Support program in 2005 and was discharged in 2008. Prior to the Family Support program this child had been in out of home placement for several years. Her last placement was a stay at the ND state hospital. The medical assistance costs were over \$250,000 for that year. At the time of discharge from the state hospital, her team sought therapeutic foster care. Although a foster care home was sought one could not

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## President's Corner

By James Schnabel, President



Fall is approaching fast and soon it will be time for our annual fall conference. I personally am looking forward to reconnecting with old friends and meeting some new ones. I believe we have put together a conference that will be very valuable to all foster parents.

This conference will also mark a changing of the guard so to speak. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you but the time has come for someone else to lead. It is time for new, brighter, and better ideas to lead foster parents into the future. If anyone is interested in leadership roles for the association please contact one of the officers and let us know.

I encourage all of you to keep up the good fight for children and I hope to see you all at this year's conference.

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## From the State Office

By Don Snyder, Administrator,



Dean Sturn recently became the new ILP Administrator for North Dakota and comes to us with a great background and lots of experience throughout child welfare. Dean started work at the Dakota Boys Ranch in Minot and then Ruth Meiers in Grand Forks. He became the director of Ruth Meiers and after more than 8 years, became the director of South West Keys. Dean then worked for Casey Family Services until they closed and left North Dakota. He became employed by PATH ND until he joined us at the Department of Human Services. Dean is active as a field supervisor for undergraduate and graduate social workers.

Please join me in welcoming him and if you have question related to ILP Dean can be contacted at 701-328-1018 or dsturn@nd.gov.

### House bill could have a positive impact on foster youth.

Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA) and Jerry Weller (R-IL) introduced new legislation to improve the lives of foster children. Called the Fostering Connections to Success Act, the legislation targets specific deficiencies in the foster care system across the nation. This legislation, if passed could extend federal foster care payment up to 21 years of age, provide federal support for relatives caring for foster children, provide services to Native American tribes, and improve the oversight of the health and educational needs of children in foster care.

Jim McDermott said, "Kids, not politics, come first, second, third and that's the way we ought to be doing business on behalf of the American people, especially our most vulnerable citizens. This bill provides real help for children in foster care, especially those now pushed out of the system on their 18th birthday and those who want to live with relatives."

Rep Weller said: "Studies have shown again and again that young people with a stable home environment often do better in school, and become more productive members of society when they reach working age,...this bill is aimed at providing solid footing for these young people and the people who care for them."

This will not cure all our issues, but it will go a long way to help youth gain some stability in placement and a sense of connection. We'll keep you informed and updated as the bill progresses through congress.

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## PATH Family Support

Continued from page 1

be found. A referral was then made to the Family Support Program. The Family Support Program was able to maintain this young lady at home with her mother through consistent relief care, mentoring support, the wrapping of services around the family, as well as crisis intervention. Not only was this girl able to be maintained at home, there were no psychiatric or partial hospitalizations required during the time she was in the program. She graduated from high school this past spring. There are many such success stories within the program. Although not all cases are as successful as this one, the majority are successful.

### BECOME A FAMILY SUPPORT PARENT

The Family Support Program continues to expand. Along with the increased number of at-risk children served, comes the need for an increased number of support homes. Becoming a support parent is an extremely rewarding endeavor. Great gratification comes from helping children remain in the home with their families. In order to become a support parent you must become a licensed foster care parent. Once licensed, support parents receive 24 hour support from their PATH case manager as well as ongoing education. Types of support homes vary greatly, ranging from single parent homes to two parent homes with several of their own children. Great care takes place when placing a support child in a home. The best match is sought for not only the child and their family in care, but also the support home and their family.

The Family Support Program has been in existence since 1996, and continues to grow. Currently, Family Support services are offered in Fargo, Bismarck, Grand Forks, and Minot. If you are interest in becoming a PATH Support parent or know of a child or family that could benefit from the service, please contact your local PATH office.

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## Caring for Ourselves While Caring for Others

Continued from page 5

day. Having something to look forward to has a tremendous impact on your attitude.

Some foster parent support groups provide "Foster Family Survival Kits" for new parents. Some of the items in each "kit" include: "patience" slip; emergency numbers; aspirin; list of respite providers/foster parent mentors; bubbles and bubble bath; pen (for paperwork); tums for the tummy; kleenex (for tears); candy kisses (to sweeten the day); list of training opportunities; aromatherapy candle; movie pass; McDonald's coupon; stress ball.

You are all to be commended for assuming the responsibility for this most vulnerable population of our society. Enjoy one thing each day ... and make it each other.

Karen Jorgenson has over 30 years of training experience in the field of child welfare and as a parent educator. Karen has worked as a licensed social worker, foster care recruitment and licensing specialist, Head Start teacher and trainer and an instructor in psychology and child development at the post-secondary level. Karen is a former foster parent, adoptive parents of children with special needs, and a parent. Reprinted with permission.

## *Resources for Foster and Adopt Parents and Agency Staff*

By Dawnita Nilles

### About On the Line with CWLA

*On the Line with CWLA* is a thought-provoking, interactive, live Internet radio program focusing on subjects, stories, and strategies of special interest to child welfare policymakers, providers, and practitioners. The program, devoted solely to discussions about the welfare of America's vulnerable children, features a forum where numerous points of view and voices of experience within the child welfare universe can be heard. To listen to *On the Line with CWLA*, go to [www.blogtalkradio.com/CWLA-Radio](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/CWLA-Radio).

The live program, hosted by broadcasting veteran Tony Regusters, is a production of CWLA that will provide a platform for CWLA member organizations, their staffs, its partners, and concerned citizens in the national community to share ideas and thoughts about critical issues that affect child welfare agencies, vulnerable children and teens, and their families.

The weekly subject-oriented, solutions-driven program broadcasts online at [www.blogtalkradio.com/CWLA-Radio](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/CWLA-Radio), **Wednesdays, 2:00-2:30 pm ET** and feature in-depth, timely discussions with leading child welfare experts, agents, and advocates; leadership and representatives from CWLA's member agencies; and local and national political figures working to improve child welfare and give a voice to child welfare professionals, providers, and practitioners nationwide.

*On the Line with CWLA* is a production of the Child Welfare League of America, Arlington, Virginia.

### Future Programs

*Programs scheduling tentative and subject to change*

October 1.....	The Messages Project
October 8.....	Latina Victims of Domestic Violence
October 15.....	A Conversation with Victor Rivers
October 22.....	Online Training Around Domestic Violence & Child Welfare
October 29.....	Gay Adoption
November 5.....	The Future of Child Welfare in the Next Administration
November 12.....	No Home for the Holidays
November 19.....	A Conversation with Reverend Darryl Armstrong
November 26.....	Adoption
December 3.....	Early Intervention
December 10.....	A Conversation with Susan Taylor
December 17.....	Holiday Blues: The Impact on Families
December 24.....	Rerun
December 31.....	Rerun

The program broadcasts on the Internet every Wednesday, 2:00-2:30 pm ET. The call-in number is 347/326-9411. Visit [www.blogtalkradio.com/CWLA-Radio](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/CWLA-Radio).

### NEW Training Toolkit! - Helping Behavioral Health Clients with Parenting & Child Custody Issues

The UPenn Collaborative on Community Integration has developed a free tool kit for parents with serious mental illnesses. Research indicates that mothers with serious

mental illnesses are almost three times more likely than mothers without such illnesses to have been involved in the child welfare system or to have lost custody of their children. The tool kit helps parents who have lost custody or are at risk of losing custody of their children, helps parents in recovery from mental illnesses with parenting issues, and offers guidance for professionals as well. The tool kit, "Helping Behavioral Health Clients with Parenting & Child Custody Issues," may be downloaded at [http://www.upennrrtc.org/resources/view.php?tool\\_id=185](http://www.upennrrtc.org/resources/view.php?tool_id=185)

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**Walk Me Home...to the place I belong** has been created for a threefold purpose; generate awareness of foster care, recruit and retain foster families and to raise much needed funds to support the programs and services of the foster care associations nationwide. This is Walk Me Home's inaugural year and 20 states have chosen to participate. Several states are conducting multiple Walks and it is expected that over 100 Walks will be conducted from May through October.

Walk Me Home is the signature fund-raising and awareness event for foster care in America. We know not everyone can be a foster parent, but Walk Me Home is a great way to support the over 513,000 children in foster care. This year thousands and thousands of walkers will participate in Walk Me Home events across the country, raising funds to support the life changing programs and activities of foster care associations throughout the United States. Registration information is available at [www.walkmehome.org](http://www.walkmehome.org).

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### UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX FIRST CHANCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Through a partnership with University of Phoenix and the National Foster Parent Association, NFPA will be provided 50 full tuition scholarships redeemable at University of Phoenix for youth in foster care affiliated with NFPA. Recipients may choose any campus they want to attend, including online. The program will be administered under the First Chance Scholarship umbrella, with two application periods per year.

Looking for campus or online university-level programs that are convenient yet high quality? The University of Phoenix has forty-three campus locations in the US, Canada, US territories and the District of Columbia. They also provide online degree programs and flexible scheduling for working students in fields such as business and management, communications, criminal justice and security, education, general studies, nursing and health care, human services, psychology, and technology. Whether you attend class on campus or online the University of Phoenix enables you to earn your college degree without putting your life on hold.

For any additional information, please email/call Karen Jorgenson at the National Foster Parent Association, 800-557-5238, [kjorgenson@nfpaonline.org](mailto:kjorgenson@nfpaonline.org).



## 2008 North Dakota Foster/Adopt Parent Annual Conference

### Raising Our Future

**Registration Form** - Please register by September 24, 2008

Mail or fax to: 2008 ND Foster / Adopt Parent Annual Conference  
Children and Family Services Training Center  
225 Centennial Drive, STOP 7090  
Grand Forks, ND 58202 OR: Fax: 701-777-0789

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First MI

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First MI

Licensing Agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street/Box City State/Zip

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee includes NDFAPA membership, registration materials, Friday reception, Saturday breakfast, lunch, banquet, and breaks. Meals and breaks include vegetarian options. Child care is the responsibility of the individual participants. Forms for reimbursement of child care and other expenses will be available at registration.

- **Conference Registration Fee: \$80 per person. University/College Students (does not include meals): \$20.**  
Checks should be made payable to: **North Dakota Foster/Adopt Parent Association.**
  - **Conference Fee:** \$80 per person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_
  - **Student Fee:** \$20 per person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_
- **Additional Meals to be purchased for children and other guests not attending the conference; and students:**
  - **Saturday Lunch** \$12.50 X \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_
  - **Saturday Banquet** \$22.00 X \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_
  - Total = \_\_\_\_\_**
- **Please indicate if you have any special dietary needs:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Lodging** is available at the Doublewood Inn (800 433-3235) or the Red River Lodge (701 282-9100). Please call to reserve your room before September 11, 2008 to ensure the state rate. If you have difficulty with motel reservations, please call Bobbi Geiger @ Fargo PATH, 1-800-766-9321.

**Workshop Selection:** Please indicate the sessions you wish to attend on Saturday afternoon. If couples are registering together, you should both indicate which session you will attend (1-5).

**Session A (1:15 – 2:45 pm):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Session B (3:00 – 4:45 pm):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Certification Registration:** If you are planning to attend a Friday afternoon workshop requiring certification please check below. This training is for those needing to meet this licensing requirement. Please register early as space is limited.

<b>First Aid Certification:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Number Attending:</b> _____
<b>CPR Re-Certification:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Number Attending:</b> _____
<b>CPI Re-Certification:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Number Attending:</b> _____

#### PATH Annual Meeting Registration

- Please indicate if you will be attending the PATH Annual Meeting which will be held Sunday, October 5.
- Additional brunch tickets may be purchased for children or guests for \$10.50 made payable to PATH.
  - Number Attending PATH Annual Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Additional Tickets Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Conference Agenda

### Friday, October 3, 2008

12:00pm – 8:00pm Registration in Redwood Court  
12:00pm – 7:30pm Fire Extinguisher Servicing Drop-Off  
(payment due at this time)  
1:00pm – 4:00pm CPI Re-Certification  
1:00pm – 4:00pm CPR Re-Certification  
1:00pm – 4:00pm First Aid Certification  
6:00pm – 7:30pm Fire Safety Training

7:45pm – 8:15pm **Welcome:** James Schnabel, NDFAPA President; Paul Ronningen, Director of the Children and Family Services Division of DHS; Julie Hoffman, Adoptions Administrator of the Children and Family Services Division of DHS  
8:15pm – 9:15pm **Keynote Address:** *Change with Humor* – Patty Corwin  
9:15pm – 10:30pm Reception with hors d'oeuvres and cash bar

Cultural Hall

An exciting feature of the conference this year will be information booths from several cultural groups which will provide information on the history of the people, family traditions and favorite foods.  
8:00am – 6:00pm in the Chestnut Room

7:00am – 10:00am Registration

8:30am – 11:30am **Plenary Speaker: *Why Tokens Aren't Working: Helping Children with Severe Behaviors*** – Heather Forbes

11:30am – 1:00pm NDFAPA Business Meeting and Luncheon

**1:15pm – 2:45pm Session A Workshops**

A-1 **Why Tokens Aren't Working: Helping Children with Severe Behaviors** (Continue this learning opportunity with hands-on presentation) – Heather Forbes

*(This workshop will be a three hour session, from 1:15 – 4:30 pm).*

A-2 **Inhalants, Drug Paraphernalia (including an exhibit) and Recognizing Drug Related Behaviors** – David Frisch  
*(repeated in B-2)*

A-3 **The Impact of Trauma on Child Development** – Steve Wonderlich

A-4 **Dealing with Secondary Trauma and Keeping Your Marriage Healthy** – Peter & Vicki Schmidt

A-5 **Working with Youth Who Have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders** – Lynne Frigaard *(repeated in B-5)*

**3:00pm – 4:30pm Session B Workshops**

B-1 **Why Tokens Aren't Working: Helping Children with Severe Behaviors** (Continue this learning opportunity with hands-on presentation) – Heather Forbes

*(This workshop is a continuation of A-1).*

B-2 **Inhalants, Drug Paraphernalia (including an exhibit) and Recognizing Drug Related Behaviors** – David Frisch  
*(repeat of A-2)*

B-3 **Foster Youth Sexual Orientation** – Kama Jensen

B-4 **Developmental Stages of a Foster Parent** – Mike Peterson

B-5 **Working with Youth Who Have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders** – Lynne Frigaard *(repeat of A-5)*

**4:45pm – 5:45pm Session C Workshop**

**Foster/Adopt Parents Making a Difference. What Can We Do?**

This discussion session will give foster and adopt parents the opportunity to present our ideas of what we can do to impact our lives in each of these important areas (legislation, courts, community awareness, and culture).

We will narrow the focus from a broad range of possibilities down to a small number of actions we can hope to accomplish in the next year.

6:00pm – 7:00pm Social Hour

7:00pm – 9:00pm Closing Banquet with Entertainment

**Sunday, October 5, 2008**

**8:30am – 11:45am PATH Annual Meeting with Brunch**

The specific agenda for the PATH annual meeting will be available at the conference. Attendance at the PATH annual meeting will qualify for three hours of training for PATH foster parents.

THE NORTH DAKOTA FOSTER AND ADOPT PARENT ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization seeking to draw together concerned parents who are participating in the care of children whether through licensed or specialized foster care, adoption, or guardianship. This conference is an opportunity for those individuals to network with one another and to learn more about caring for children. Please visit our website at: [www.caringforkidsnd.com](http://www.caringforkidsnd.com).

## Caring for Ourselves While Caring for Others

By Karen Jorgensen, Executive Director, NFPA

We all know that the children and youth being placed in our homes are becoming more challenging. Foster parents across the country report that youth they are caring for are more emotionally and behaviorally disturbed, frequently exhibiting multiple problems. One of the effects of caring for these challenging kids is that we find the job affecting our relationships with others, especially our spouse, partner, or significant others. To take care of others we must keep in mind that we first need to care for ourselves and our intimate relationships to avoid burnout and to continue providing good care.

Dr. Rick Delaney writes, "When a foster or adoptive child enters his/her new home, the impact can be highly stressful, especially when the child is emotionally troubled and the victim of past abuse, neglect or sexual exploitation. In effect, the foster or adoptive family **imports** the child's history into their family. Oftentimes such families unsuspectingly fall victim to the child's historically distorted expectations about parents. In short order, the child evokes from these new parents negative feelings and behaviors which are as unfamiliar to, as they are unwanted by, the couple." (*The Healing Power of the Family*, 1997) Caring for our relationships can be easily forgotten but plays an important part in determining success in foster care.

Healthy relationships between care givers helps sustain energy and balance during challenging times when caring for traumatized children and youth. Frequently, one care giver steps in when the other care giver feels overwhelmed, is ill, or needs to attend to the needs of other family members. Having established an understanding of the needs of each other, the transition of responsibility happens seamlessly and provides a positive role model for the children in care.

### Some Characteristics of Healthy Relationships

- **Communicating:** take a moment to assess how you communicate with each other, verbally and non-verbally. Touching, holding hands, hugging and teasing relieve stress. When is the last time you gave a gift or card to your significant other, **for no reason**? The first year my husband and I were married, I was working for the Bank of America in Santa Barbara. On Valentine's Day all of the girls in the bank received flowers, except me. The following day I received flowers from my husband with a note reading "I refuse to believe that yesterday was Valentine's Day!" Forty-two years later, I have never received a gift or flowers on V-Day; it may be a few days before or two weeks later, always unexpected. He has made this a tradition – keeping fun in our relationship.
- **Recognizing stress/dysfunction/conflict:** these feelings or interactions are not because of what has changed in the relationship, but are influenced by the challenges of troubled children in placement in your home. Talk about it. Take a break.
- **Taking time to renew your relationship:** surprise your special person by arranging for child care, making a reservation, and driving him/her to a favorite place, for an evening or a weekend.
- **Taking care of yourself:** make a list of all the things you would like to do on a day if you had no responsibilities or appointments (dream away!). Then pick a day within the next three months and make arrangements for **your** special

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## Educational Training Voucher Program

In the last newsletter we discussed flexible funding and what it can be used for. Now that schools are starting it is important to let you know about another type of funding available to youth who do age out of foster care. The Educational Training Voucher (or ETV) is money that will help pay the costs of post-secondary education.

To be eligible a youth MUST age out of a foster care placement, in other words the young person may not be at the Youth Correction Center or the State Hospital on their 18th birthday. The youth must also have been in foster care for a minimum of one year. Youth who were adopted after age 16 (and soon age 13) are also eligible for the ETV money. The youth must attend a college, university, technical or vocation school that meets the requirements for Federal Financial aid assistance. This does not have to be a school in ND. A youth is required to apply and qualify for federal financial aid before he/she can apply for ETVs.

One really unique aspect to the ETV program, that is a HUGE benefit to young people aging out of foster care, is the youth does NOT have to begin college right after high school. They have to begin the post-secondary education program before their 21st birthday and they can then continue to receive the money until they have hit their maximum allowed or they turn 23 years old, whichever comes first. The maximum allowed is \$5000 per year for 4 years for a maximum of up to \$20,000. The amount awarded

does depend on availability of funds and the number of youth who apply.

In order to receive the money the IL coordinator must prove the cost of attendance (this information is usually supplied by the school itself). Just like federal financial aid the youth can only have as much money as it costs to attend the program. Allowable expenses include tuition, fees, equipment or materials; books, supplies and reasonable transportation costs; room and board; child care; accommodations for a related disability; and expenses related to a work experience (i.e. if you go into auto mechanics you need a set of tools).

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### NDFPA Executive Board

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**Awards:** Colette Sorenson, Williston

**Legislative:** Keatha McLeod, Horace

**Scholarship:** Open

**Policies:** Carrol Burchinal, Bismarck

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